



onlooker's DIARY

ISTHMIAN LEAGUE officials can readily be forgiven if they carry smug expressions around with them for the next few weeks.

Unquestionably, the election of Walton and Hersham and Bishops Stortford last Monday night to the competition is one of the heaviest kicks in the pants Athenian League football has received since it expanded to take in the old Corinthian and Delphian Leagues.

The Athenians, who only a matter of days earlier had confidently announced plans to increase their Premier Division by four clubs, suddenly found themselves minus two leading members.

Stortford are reigning champions, while Hersham won the title in 1969. Their move leaves only Dagenham, Slough and perhaps Leatherhead as Athenians with any particularly strong reputation.

Smug Isthmians? Who could blame them?

Geoff Dell, Athenian League secretary, commented after the Isthmians meeting that Bishops Stortford and Walton and Hersham were joining a "dead competition".

But, as a Wycombe Wanderers official said: "As soon as vacancies occur in the Isthmian League, there are always numerous applications from Athenian League clubs to join."

Indeed, several other Athenians made unsuccessful applications this season.

Former Athenians prospering in the "dead competition" include Enfield and Hendon,

But, to echo sentiments already expressed . . . now they have been given what amounts to a storming vote of confidence, let us now see the Isthmian officials take advantage of the situation by:

- taking immediate steps to add an extra competitive spirit either via a second division or any other method they can suggest.

- if nothing else, supplying a trophy for the winners each season. Enfield won the title three seasons in a row and got nothing tangible for their troubles.

The new clubs may find their

switch a little expensive, however. For quitting the Athenian League after January 31 they could face fines of up to £15.

Meanwhile, Maidstone and Wealdstone prepare for their new roles as semi-professionals in the Southern League.

HEATHENS AIM AT LOCAL 'DOUBLE'

FLACKWELL HEATH'S determination to beat Aylesbury United Reserves in the Wycombe Senior Cup Final at Loakes Park on Good Friday is perhaps best expressed by their secretary, Frank Darby.